



NORTHWEST RURAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY: CATALYZING COLLECTIVE CHANGE

NORTHWEST RURAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY SUMMIT
AFTER-ACTION REPORT

February 2024

Organizing Capital & Capacity for Community Resilience

The Northwest Rural Investment Strategy Summit (November 1-2, 2023) convened more than 170 attendees from organizations across the Pacific Northwest to explore how cross-sector collaboration can best position rural communities to overcome project and funding barriers and seize opportunities for change. Once-in-a-generation federal funding is available to provide catalytic change in smaller communities. There is a need—and timely opportunity—to strategically build *partnerships and processes* to launch sustainable rural community investment models with collaboration at their core.

The Summit brought together selected rural innovators and community leaders with technical assistance experts and federal, state, philanthropic, municipal bond, and impact funders to participate in cross-sector work sessions. Attendees worked collaboratively to identify innovative and replicable strategies for interweaving multiple sources of technical and financial support for high-priority infrastructure projects.

As unprecedented, large-scale funding continues to be made available, conversations across government, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors are focused on how rural and underserved communities can best

take advantage of these often complex opportunities. With next steps in mind, USDA Rural Development, along with The Oregon iSector, The Milken Institute's 10,000 Communities Initiative, Oregon Community Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, The Ford Family Foundation, Roundhouse Foundation, Business Oregon, Partners for Rural Washington, The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Innovia Foundation, Climate Solutions, WA State Department of Commerce, and US Department of Housing and Urban Development, partnered to host a two-day Summit to collectively brainstorm solutions to complex rural funding and infrastructure challenges.

This report summarizes the shared needs, challenges, and goals explored at the Summit, and it outlines just a few of the many innovative ideas, examples, and solutions that arose through work sessions. It highlights *what is possible* for rural and underserved communities, and how we can leverage this momentum for the long haul. Together, we can ensure the influx of federal dollars is not a one-time investment, but a spark that ignites the transformation of rural communities for generations to come.

“In too many places, rural leaders are starved for the investment they need to support their community’s social and economic transformation. From my perspective, this kind of innovation is a lesson in maximizing the impact of USDA Rural Development’s (RD) financial, intellectual, and social capital within the local ecosystem of partners and stakeholders. [This Summit] provides a model that counterparts in other states could replicate and demonstrates how the systems, incentive structures, and expectations for RD staff and the USDA might beneficially change. Putting beauty, quality of life, and pride of place at the center is a powerful combination for catalyzing community renewal.”

TONY PIPA

REIMAGINING RURAL POLICY INITIATIVE, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION



*Participants Engage in Cross-Sectoral Workshop,
USDA Photo by Phil Eggman*



*Alexis Pelosi, Senior Advisor for Climate, Office of
the Secretary, HUD, USDA Photo by Phil Eggman*

Shared Goals & Objectives

During the Summit, attendees caucused in synergistic groups to discuss opportunities for partnerships and leveraging resources. Sector-based groups explored:

- I. identifying priority tools needed to scale rural projects;
- II. removing or mitigating constraints of federal, state, local, philanthropic, and other capital; and,
- III. accelerating—and maximizing—investment of federal capital into rural and underserved communities.

Recurring themes included collaboration and coalitions; resource sharing and centralization; technical assistance and capacity building needs; and utilization of intermediaries and liaisons. While these themes have been consistent and oft-repeated for years (and are deeply known by those in the trenches of this work every day), discussions at the Summit reinforced cross-sector agreement that these themes are where efforts should be concentrated.

There are two factors that set this Summit apart, and through which hope—for solutions, for action, for investment—was elevated:

1. The Summit strategically brought a representative cross-section of capital providers, capacity builders, and community representatives together. While it is common for funders and communities to collaborate, or for technical assistance providers to work directly with community organizations, these sectors rarely have the chance to

communicate openly with one another in an environment with no barriers, no curtains, and no expectations. Each attendee had the opportunity to share their own hopes and hesitations, with an eye to ongoing collaboration toward tangible progress; cross-sector partnerships forged during the summit are already bearing fruit.

Rural communities must be at the center of their own solutions—rural communities are innovative, adaptive, and know what their community needs to forge forward. However, rural communities and community based organizations often lack capacity in fund development, face a myriad of barriers to launching large-scale infrastructure projects, and lack access to external resources that are more often within reach for their urban or better resourced counterparts. More funding and technical assistance is needed to support local and regional organizations who understand their local systems.

2. Attendees shared mutual recognition of the extensive expertise and knowledge *already in the room*—the solutions are among us. Strategically connecting stakeholders allowed for the sharing of existing models (both those in the room and across the region) and their impact. There exists an opportunity to invest right now in these proven models, organizations, people, and programs. And a near term opportunity

to encourage new strategies and initiatives—here and on the horizon—that are rooted in existing trust-based relationships. Rather than looking outside of the region or waiting on a dramatically different option—can we take comfort (and quicker action) in the option of investing in the known quantities? The organizations that have been doing this work and doing it well? And that have been actively listening to rural and underserved communities and acting to address their unique needs? Let's invest in our strengths. Through matchmaking and resource navigation, communities, funders, and technical assistance providers can connect in new ways that will help the region address barriers, fill gaps, identify priority tools, and chart a collective course forward.

Throughout the two-day Summit, both speakers and attendees continued to emphasize—and demonstrate—how much diverse sectors, entity types, and communities can learn from and share with one another. We are our own most important tools in this work.

“The Northwest Rural Investment Strategy Summit was absolutely amazing. The connections made will be enduring... The mix of attendees also provided a unique perspective as well from federal, state, local, non-profit, and private funders. Lastly, having Alaska and Oregon in the room gave a unique perspective into their challenges and how they approached them as well.”

MARK BARKLEY
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE



***From left to right:** Margaret Hoffmann, USDA Rural Development State Director for Oregon; Joaquin Altoro, Administrator, Rural Housing Service; Julia Hnilicka, USDA Rural Development State Director for Alaska; Farah Ahmad, Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development; and Helen Price Johnson, USDA Rural Development State Director for Washington. USDA Photo by Phil Eggman.*

Identifying Community-Led Needs and Solutions:

With so many rural-serving organizations and resource providers working toward the same goals, it is essential that we communicate and coordinate to maximize impact. Summit attendees identified needs and solutions to common rural funding and resource challenges:

| INCREASING EFFICIENCY, COLLABORATION & LEVERAGE | MAXIMIZING IMPACT | GETTING TO SCALE |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Consider a Universal Application and Intake System for funding. + Create “One-Stop Shopping” for funding and resources available to communities. + Prioritize Coalition Building to amplify voices and share resources. + Simplify Grant Application Processes: remove jargon, unreachable timelines, and match requirements. <i>Be clear about who can apply for what.</i> + Rely on Bridge-Builders to advocate for changes in policies. + Utilize Partners to serve as fiduciary administrators. + Employ a “Hub and Spoke” Model to benefit communities or organizations who lack capacity to apply for grants. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Empower Local and Regional Players to establish priorities and ensure funding is available to address those priorities. + Utilize Local and Regional Intermediaries to provide technical assistance, deploy capital at the local level, and act as liaisons. + Provide More Funding at the State Level to address local priorities. + Understand the Types of Capital, their flexibilities, and their limitations. + Address Unintentional Inequities in funding processes. + Build Capacity in Rural and Underserved Communities—leadership, technology, fund development, and communications are priority needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provide Flexible Resources with Regional Oversight via intermediaries. + Invest in Regional Entities, building their capacity to provide technical assistance for pre-development and other difficult-to-fund needs. + Develop More Predevelopment and Contingency Funding—flexible funding with high risk tolerance that can be deployed throughout the lifecycle of a project. + Provide Localized, Individualized Support—be adaptive vs. prescriptive. + Emphasize Building Relationships and Trust to ensure community buy-in—local vision and needs must be centered and heard. |

Six Tracks of Infrastructure

Summit attendees participated in use case workshops to explore strategies for planning, funding, and implementing infrastructure projects across six priority tracks: Developing Attainable Rural Housing; Expanding Access to Rural Child Care; Bridging the Rural Digital Divide; Transforming Local Food Systems; Securing Agricultural and Municipal Water Supplies; and Constructing Community Resilience Centers and Emergency Buildings. Note that the potential solutions identified below are examples from notes taken during the workshops. They are not intended as a complete set of recommendations, but to give the reader a sense of the conversations that took place at the Summit.

1. Developing Attainable Rural Housing

Although the multi-faceted housing crisis continues nationwide in both metropolitan and rural areas, rural communities confront unique circumstances. For example, many rural communities often have fewer primes and subcontractors available in various construction, architecture, engineering, and related fields; increased infrastructure needs associated with obtaining and transporting building materials add to their already elevated costs (further reducing profit margins); and water and land conservation efforts can complicate zoning and permitting, among other challenges. With lower median incomes and lower credit scores, those living in rural areas were harder hit by the 2008 housing crisis, the effects of which are still being felt today in the form of damaged finances, foreclosed homes, doubled mortgage rates, and a steep decline in construction.

During a use case workshop centered on Developing Attainable Rural Housing, representatives from Oregon Community Foundation, Walla Walla Housing Authority, and Catalyst Public Policy Advisors explored examples of innovative housing solutions. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, this workshop provided several avenues for rural communities to consider and adapt to their specific circumstances.

| POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED |
|--|
| Create Urban Renewal Areas or “Regional Rural Revitalization:” offer incentives for developers, builders, and homebuyers. |
| Utilize alternative technologies to make homes more affordable (mass timber, design manufacture installation (DMI) of prefabricated components, 3D printing). |
| Philanthropy can shift toward being the first money to commit instead of the last. <i>“Not just putting the doorbell on.”</i> They can also advocate and encourage state government to take action. |

Potential Rural Housing Solutions Continue on Next Page —

Conduct outreach to ensure community engagement and support—local residents are key to moving rural housing projects forward. Educate community members on housing goals and challenges and provide opportunities for them to be part of the solution.

Consider Community Land Trusts to help with long-term affordability. [Opal Community Land Trust in Washington](#) is a model worth exploring, and can serve to aggregate demand for a pipeline.

Have a vision and an entrepreneurial mindset. Test, validate, scale.

“Two schools of thought are at play to address this housing crisis. One, create deed restrictions (current model), which bucks the market and locks in prices that may be disadvantageous to rural communities in the long run. Two, build more housing. Increase supply and get more innovative in our construction methods and approaches to lower the cost per square foot.”

NICK GREEN, CATALYST PUBLIC POLICY ADVISORS

2. Expanding Access to Rural Child Care

There is a massive child care shortage in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in remote rural areas. Child care is a complex economic challenge; cost is high, and affordability is a barrier to both care providers and parents. Parents want child care close to their home and work, and in isolated rural communities, that can be especially difficult. Child care affordability and accessibility issues can cause parents (particularly women) to remain out of the workforce. However, despite the high cost of child care, care workers’ wages remain lower than almost any other occupation. The current system needs to shift.

Summit attendees heard from Children’s Institute, Child Care Aware of Washington, First Rule Group, Early Learning Hub of Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties, and Euvalcree, as speakers shared innovative models and common challenges to expanding child care in rural Pacific Northwest communities.

Potential Rural Child Care Solutions Continue on Next Page —

| POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED |
|---|
| Seek existing child care training models that can be scaled for any community. For example, “ Growing Care ” is an affordable child care project intended to scale. They recruit, train, and retain care workers, providing incentives for people to work in their homes. Participants have access to grants, startup dollars, and mentoring. |
| Help employers be part of the child care solution by connecting employers and child care providers. Employers can also seek tax credits for providing child care services. |
| New funding and policies are paving the way to make child care more affordable and accessible, but more resources are needed. In Oregon, for example, HB 3005 passed in 2023 created a \$50 million Child Care Infrastructure Fund to support new and improve existing child care facilities. Also, SB 599 dictates that landlords can no longer prevent licensed child care from operating in rental homes. |
| Incorporate business training into all child care training programs, helping ensure that child care providers can both launch and sustain successful small businesses. |
| Create funding pools to provide small grants toward licensing fees for existing providers. |
| Look to collaborate. Project Oasis is a great example of a public-private community solution for child care. |

“Our home-based child care recruitment campaign, Growing Care, was developed hoping it would be copied. There is nothing unique about it that won’t work in other areas as long as there are minimal start-up grants, funding and support for free business training, and funding to set up a professional advertisement campaign for recruitment. We have all the pieces set up already. It works very well in rural areas. Don’t reinvent the wheel, we already built it. If anyone is actually interested in tackling the child care crisis fast and cheaply, feel free to copy it.”

BRYAN STEINHAUSER
EARLY LEARNING HUB OF LINN, BENTON AND LINCOLN COUNTIES (OREGON)

3. Bridging the Rural Digital Divide

Many rural areas lack equitable broadband access, largely because there is little return on investment for internet service providers (ISPs) to build networks in sparsely populated areas. There is also little competition among service providers in rural areas, resulting in higher prices and lower internet speeds in many rural communities. With new federal broadband funding coming down the pipeline, state and territorial offices must work with local government and stakeholders to ensure they are prepared to take advantage of new funds and that the foundations for successful projects are laid.

Representatives from Milken Institute and HR&A Advisors provided an overview of the project development cycle and outlined the necessary components to get a broadband project off the ground in rural areas.

| POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED |
|--|
| When starting complex broadband projects, make a governance plan , including decision-making practices and staff. Team assembly is an important first step in project readiness. |
| A state component can help coordinate partnerships to bring many sectors to the table. |
| Create a map of regional funders for broadband to help rural communities navigate financing. |
| The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program provides \$42 billion in federal funding to expand high-speed internet access. State offices are adapting existing broadband programs and new programs are on the way. |
| A wealth of local and regional technical assistance resources exist, but are difficult to navigate; consider technical assistance ‘matchmaking’ hubs. |
| Create a broadband data resource page for the region and support data-centric technical assistance to help communities find and understand rural data. |
| Harvard’s Procurement Excellence Network (PEN) is a great resource for local governments. |

Potential Rural Digital Divide Solutions Continue on Next Page —

Utilize the [Infrastructure Funding Navigator](#) Project Eligibility and Readiness Assessment to determine if your project is funding-ready.

Tips, needs, and recommendations: Add training and maintenance costs in contracts; open access agreements across counties; change procurement compliance limits to allow more flexibility.

“For smaller cities like Vale with populations under 2,000, staffing availability is a hindrance when considering federal funding. Typically, only one to three staff have time to manage the employees, payroll, billing, committee meetings, and complete other normal weekly tasks for the city. Trying to add one or more additional tasks is daunting... The only answer I can come up with is to provide help to pair technical assistance personnel with a municipality.”

TODD FULLER, CITY OF VALE, OR

4. Transforming Local Food Systems

Rural food systems are complex. With many interrelated challenges to consider to improve food security, among top priorities are supporting small farms and food businesses; safeguarding culturally significant foods and food sovereignty; adapting practices to build resilience in the face of a changing climate; and ensuring equitable access to healthy food. This also includes connecting farmers, fisheries, and small food businesses with market opportunities, a potential win-win in providing rural people with increased access to locally produced fresh food.

In a discussion moderated by USDA Rural Development Washington, panelists from Yakama Nation Farms and USDA Agricultural Marketing Service presented a sustainable farming and food sovereignty model and discussed USDA’s new Regional Food Business Centers.

Potential Local Food Systems Solutions Continue on Next Page —

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED

[**USDA’s Northwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center**](#) is a new “node” and resource for food systems funding, data, collaboration, communication, and technical assistance. Stay tuned as they continue to expand services, with a focus on connecting and scaling food entrepreneurs and “right-sizing” investment and infrastructure.

Utilize/develop a platform where rural communities, rural serving organizations, and resource providers can actively share information and communicate with one another on food systems change.

There is a perceived gap between Tribes and agriculture. In 2023, USDA selected the [**Intertribal Agriculture Council**](#) to establish a **National Intertribal Food Business Center** and create Native-serving food systems.

Create one-stop-shopping for food-systems funding opportunities for the region.

The [**Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program \(LFPA\)**](#) **provides contracts** for governments to purchase local foods, supporting local producers and improving supply chain resiliency.

Another round of [Regional Food System Partnerships \(RFSP\)**](#) grants are available.**

[**USDA’s Wholesale Market Facility Design team**](#) can review environmental issues, initial concept, site selection, third-party design reviews, etc. for local food system projects.

Steps toward food systems transformation in rural areas include a focus on local communication and engagement; information exchange on how to leverage efforts; and making a shift to match projects to funding programs (rather than projects bending to meet funding opportunity guidelines).

“Our history with this land goes back through time immemorial. Continuing the valuable lessons taught by those who have come before is going to be key to our success. The value of regional collaborative efforts between partners and stakeholders is already proving to be an irreplaceable piece of the puzzle when it comes to the strength and longevity of our rural communities. One of the biggest hurdles I think most tribes and rural communities face is not knowing who to initially speak with to get projects or ideas started. These collaborative efforts help bring the right people together to get ideas and voices heard, which as we’ve seen, usually gets projects that many thought were impossible just a decade ago, get the traction they need to really get moving. By investing in what we know are the keys to the future survival of rural communities, we are ensuring that the places we call home will be successful for generations to come.”

JONALEE SQUEOCHS, YAKAMA NATION FARMS

5. Securing Agricultural and Municipal Water Supplies

As many rural communities look to address aging water infrastructure and both current and future impacts of climate change on local water supplies, there are a number of challenges and hurdles to overcome. Funding large-scale infrastructure projects is complex and requires extensive planning, collaboration, and community buy-in. For rural areas, a lack of skilled tradespeople compounds the issue, as does local capacity to find and manage the multiple sources of funding required for projects of this scope.

During a conversation moderated by USDA Rural Development Oregon, panelists from Farmers Conservation Alliance, the City of Hermiston, and Seal Rock Water District shared lessons and successes from water infrastructure projects in Northwest rural communities.

Potential Water Supplies Solutions Continue on Next Page —

| POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED |
|--|
| EPA has established Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers (TCTAC's) to remove barriers and build capacity for communities experiencing environmental injustice. |
| To address match funding barriers, allow for later maintenance costs to qualify for match , capturing the economic benefit and removing an application barrier. Consider a shift to allow pre-agreement expenses toward match as well. |
| As costs and technology continue to shift, pre-development needs to include redesigning systems , taking into account climate change, increasing water supply issues, water conservation, green energy, technology, etc. |
| Maintenance is key —budgets need to include funding for adequate maintenance. |
| Lead community members along with the project —take one step at a time to build engagement and confidence. Express the importance of water. Believe that conversation about the project is worthwhile and the project can happen. |
| Water infrastructure success story: Seal Rock Water District |

“We talked a lot about the need for help conceptualizing and putting together projects—and THEN there’s the problem of matching funds... When a match is required for a grant, allow pre-agreement costs—expenses incurred before the grant application or award—to be used as matching funds.”

SHAWN IRVINE, CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OR

6. Constructing Community Resilience Centers and Emergency Buildings

Rural communities are on the front lines of climate related disasters such as wildfires and floods, and communities in the Pacific Northwest must also be prepared in the event of a catastrophic earthquake or tsunami. As we saw during Oregon’s Labor Day 2020 wildfires, many communities—and state agencies—are ill-prepared to respond to large-scale natural disasters. Emergency preparedness and resilience planning must be implemented and strengthened throughout the region—but rural communities need support.

Summit attendees heard from Milken Institute, SBP USA, FEMA, and Mid-Columbia Community Action Council as panelists discussed current steps being taken to improve disaster resiliency in the region.

| POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED |
|---|
| FEMA has established Round 1 Community Disaster Resilience Zones (CDRZs) to help with resiliency planning and support the areas most at risk from natural hazards and climate change. Current Northwest zones are 67% metro and mostly in Western WA and OR. There is a need—and a plan—to establish more rural CDRZs. |
| SBP USA piloted a Resilience & Recovery Fellows Program to provide extra capacity for rural communities vulnerable to disaster. Fellows collaborate with local stakeholders to lead planning and funding efforts to improve local resilience. This program is expected to expand in 2024. |
| Lean on Long-Term Recovery Groups and others in communities who have “been there.” |
| Develop a regional registry of network providers or create a regional community channel to help public and private entities connect, share resources, and build collaboratively. |
| HR&A is quantifying project stages of the project development cycle to create replicable use cases. |
| Create a government feedback mechanism so it is easier to make improvements and communicate about needs. |

“Once-in-a-generation funding opportunities from the federal government offer new opportunities for catalytic positive change for the region’s underserved rural and frontier communities. This partnership is bringing together federal, state, philanthropic, municipal and impact funders capital providers together to seize this moment to leverage investment in local rural communities and enable accelerated access to federal capital.”

DAN CAROL, MILKEN FOUNDATION

Looking Ahead

The Northwest Rural Investment Strategy Summit provided a unique forum to begin cross-sector, systems-level work. Summit participants resoundingly agreed this is the path forward and that stakeholders and partners must continue to convene cross-sector groups that advance individual projects, capture and share replicable models, and inform program and policy makers on rural needs and considerations. Participants also supported development of place-based solutions that can be replicated and scaled as key to significantly increasing equitable access to funding for rural communities and Tribal Nations.

To support this work, the Northwest Rural Investment Strategy Partnership will launch the Community Infrastructure Center website for the region. This will provide an online forum for sharing information, tracking efforts and

connecting projects to resources. This will be available to the public. In addition, Washington and Oregon are forming partnerships to take this work forward in each state and have committed to working across state lines to support this new approach regionally.



*Participants Engage in Cross-Sectoral Workshop
USDA Photo by Phil Eggman*

Summit Hosts



USDA Rural Development



The Oregon iSector



The Milken Institute's 10,000 Communities Initiative



Oregon Community Foundation



Meyer Memorial Trust



The Ford Family Foundation



Roundhouse Foundation



Business Oregon



Partners for Rural Washington



The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco



Innovia Foundation



Climate Solutions



Washington State Department of Commerce



US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Use Case Workshops | Moderators and Panelists

DEVELOPING ATTAINABLE RURAL HOUSING

Moderator

Megan Loeb

Senior Program Officer, Oregon Community Foundation

Panelists

Renee Rooker

Executive Director, Walla Walla Housing Authority

Nick Green

President, Catalyst Public Policy Advisors

BRIDGING THE RURAL DIGITAL DIVIDE

Moderator

Rachel Halfaker

Associate Director, Milken Institute

Panelists

Alex Meeks

Principal, HR&A Advisors

Amruta Sakalker

Senior Analyst, HR&A Advisors

EXPANDING ACCESS TO RURAL CHILDCARE

Moderator

Kali Thorne Ladd

CEO, Children's Institute

Panelists

Michel Nelson

Director of Family & Community Engagement, Child Care Aware of Washington

Karen Langehough

Consultant and Force Multiplier, Childcare Specialist of First Rule Group

Bryan Steinhauser

Business Liaison, Early Learning Hub of Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties

Gustavo Morales

Executive Director, Euvalcree

TRANSFORMING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Moderator

Tim O'Connell

Deputy State Director, USDA Rural Development WA

Panelists

Jonalee Squeochs

Interim General Manager, Yakama Nation Farms

Samantha Schaffstall

Agricultural Marketing Specialist, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

SECURING AGRICULTURAL AND MUNICIPAL WATER SUPPLIES

Moderator

Margi Hoffman

State Director, USDA Rural Development OR

Panelists

Julie O'Shea

Farmers Conservation Alliance

Byron Smith

City Manager, Hermiston, OR

Adam Denlinger

General Manager, Seal Rock Water District

CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY CENTERS AND EMERGENCY BUILDINGS

Moderator

Dan Carol

Senior Director, Milken Institute

Panelists

Hannah Trautwein

Disaster Resilience and Recovery Manager,
SBP USA

Jeanine Peterson

Senior Advisor, Community Disaster
Resilience Zones, FEMA

Kenny LaPoint

Executive Director, Mid-Columbia Community
Action Council

Sarah Ortner

Senior Associate, Milken Institute

ADDITIONAL SUMMIT SPEAKERS

WELCOME

Helen Price Johnson

State Director, USDA Rural Development WA

CROSS-SECTORAL PANEL: Defining the Challenge & Opportunity

Moderator

Dan Carol, Senior Director, Milken Institute

Panelists

Julie O'Shea, Farmers Conservation Alliance

Margi Hoffman, State Director, USDA Rural
Development OR

Nick Green, President, Catalyst Public
Policy Advisors

Jason Carman, Training Strategist, RCAC

CROSS-SECTORAL BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Moderators

Heidi Khokhar, Executive Director, Rural
Development Initiatives

Max Williams, Past President and CEO,
Oregon Community Foundation

Advancing Your Project: Community Infrastructure Center Demonstration

Rachel Halfaker, Associate Director, Milken
Institute

KEYNOTE

Alexis Pelosi, Senior Advisor for Climate, Office
of the Secretary, HUD

2023 NORTHWEST RURAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY SUMMIT
Sponsored by Oregon iSector



Prepared by Kelley Nonprofit Consulting
February 2024

Cover Image: Autumn cloudy panoramic view on
the Washington side of the Columbia River Gorge.
USDA Photo by Phil Eggman

